

All day my father & I see them  
only as red streaks across yellow  
water, yellow fields.

All night the dog whinnies, dreaming  
he's a red horse. He carries her  
into the wind. Her red hair flies behind.

When my father gets home late  
the dog lies across the bedroom door  
& barks "Squat toad! Squat toad!"

In the room my mother sleeps  
a cool blue sleep. Next morning  
she cries & stamps her feet

because she can't find  
a way to break the spell.  
If she ever does, I know

he'll ride away with my mother  
clinging to his shoulders  
heavy & soft as a prince's robe.

#### THE DANCING QUEEN

who was no longer the fairest in the land  
knew that a pair of iron shoes  
with high heels and strong ankle straps  
had been made especially for her  
on the plaster cast of her long & narrow foot  
which was kept on file with the royal shoemaker.  
And though she knew they had been held  
over the scullery fire with iron tongs  
till their black soles & heels & vamps  
glittered white as Cinderella-glass,  
she buckled them on swiftly, deftly, unbidden  
& unassisted, when the man in the black hood,  
apology glinting out of the eyeslits,  
bowed low & placed them before her jeweled hem.  
Though her lovely face was very white  
& her much-kissed lips unaccustomedly taut,  
she walked back & forth, back & forth,  
holding her skirts above her seared ankles,  
showing the shoes to her famous mirror.  
"What do you think?" she asked it, preening.  
"They suit you perfectly," the mirror said.  
"Fine," said the queen, "I'll take them  
And I'll wear them to my daughter's wedding,  
& there, while the prince her husband waits  
to cup her hard young apples in his hands,  
I shall dance until I drop down dead."